

January 17, 2021

To whom it may concern,

I would like to respectfully express my regrets toward my past criminal behavior of which I am deeply ashamed for, and to sincerely explain the circumstances that led me into this current situation.

I was born in Brazil on January 8th, 1998. I came to the United States when I was just 17 years old with a tourist visa to visit my uncle Mauro Guimaraes and my aunt Deluma Guimaraes.

As soon as I arrived, I decided that I had to get myself a job to help pay for our living expenses. I started working at a construction company, the pay was no much but I was glad to be able to give them a little financial help.

When I turned 18 years old, I left my aunt's apartment and decided to rent a single bedroom in Malden, Massachusetts.

I have tried to change my visa for a student status. I realized that being here I would be able to get more opportunities to obtain a higher education and better career opportunities that I would not have in Brazil.

I did not get an opportunity to graduate in Brazil, so I have decided to enroll myself at Malden High School. However, due to my financial situation at time, I could not manage to juggle both school and work while trying to pay for my living expenses.

Unfortunately, nothing had worked out as planned. My permit to stay in the country expired before I could manage to save enough money to afford the change of status.

I stayed in the United States because I knew that being here I would also be able to provide for me and my family a better life and better financial conditions.

My mother had been arrested three different times and spent some time in prison when I was just a kid. Due to my mother's incarceration, I was primarily raised by my maternal grandparents under poor economic conditions.

I have never met my biological father. He abandoned us even before I was born. My grandfather was the only person that had provided some sort of fatherly guidance. He died from cancer when I was 13 years old.

I always wanted to do something special with my life-something noble-to give back. I knew I had the potential for positive contributions to society, but I am afraid to say that I was frequently sidetracked by friends. Unfortunately, as a teenager I have not been introduced to a positive social environment.

I first came in contact with drugs and alcohol when I was 18 years old indulged by the same people that put me into this current situation.

I was regularly drinking alcohol, smoking marijuana, using cocaine, methamphetamine, ecstasy, percocet, and xanax among other prescription drugs.

I almost got overdose several different times. Every day since then I could not help but wonder whether I would survive until the next day.

I had quitted my job and started selling drugs to support my drug habit. I have also started selling firearms indulced by an undercover federal agent that I met through a friend of mine.

After quitting my job my financial situation had taken a turn to the worse, I was spending all my money on drugs. I could not even pay my own living expenses. consequently, I lost my apartment because I was unable to pay the rent. I slept in one of my friend's car for a couple of days but eventually I was told to find another place to sleep.

I have lost self-control to the point of being banished from regular social contact with friends and family after stories of my criminal behavior and drug addiction surfaced.

Without a dollar, nobody to call, and nowhere else to go, I became homeless. It was a terrifying and extremely shocking experience. I spent several days wandering around public parks and sleeping in a dunkin donuts in the middle of a winter cold weather.

When I finally manage to contact my uncle and aunt again they helped me with a place to sleep and money for some food.

Eventually I managed to find another job doing landscape.

I was really determined to get a new start in my life, but yet my drug addiction was stronger than me. I was still using and selling drugs just enough to support my habit.

Today I count myself very lucky to have escaped the association with such life style. I could not be more grateful.

I am certainly ready to take all the necessary steps needed to pay my dets to society and move forward.

During my incarceration I have taken advantage of all the programs offered to me. I am currently in the process of acquiring a High School Equivalency Diploma and so far I have completed many different educational courses. Those educational courses include Carpentry, HVAC, Masonry, Vocabulary for Work Readiness, Reading for Information-Career Readiness, and ESOL (English Speakers of another Language). I have set a personal goal of becoming an architecture designer which is an old dream of mine.

I have also engaged myself in the AA/NA group. There have been no meetings due to the Covid-19 restrictions in our facility, but prior to that I used to attend all weekly meetings offered.

As the late Malcom X once said, "I escaped from being what I inevitably would have been: a fadding drug addict, stealing enough for food and narcotics, or a dead criminal in a grave." I like this quote because it relates what I ran through in my life between drug addiction and committing crimes.

"There is no shame in having been a criminal, but to remain a criminal, that is a shame," he added.

I have experienced a great social and religious awakening while incarcerated. I made a decision to follow our good lord Jesus Christ and I am fully committed to be a faithful christian. It was amazing how he reached down into the mud to lift me up as a new person. A better person.

I will not allow myself to be blinded to the misguided nature of criminal beliefs and actions ever again. I regret very deeply about my past criminal behavior. I know I cannot undo my mistakes but I will do whatever it takes to fix them.

I understand that being incarcerated is certainly not a pleasant experience and neither seeing as a matter of respect to society. However, it turned to be a second chance to get a new start in my life, and I will make the best out of this situation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Joao Pedro', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Joao Pedro M.G. Gama

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